

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

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**April 26, 2011**

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**Statement by President Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day**

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
April 23, 2011

**Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day**

We solemnly remember the horrific events that took place ninety-six years ago, resulting in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. In 1915, 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire.

I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view of that history has not changed. A full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all our interests. Contested history destabilizes the present and stains the memory of those whose lives were taken, while reckoning with the past lays a sturdy foundation for a peaceful and prosperous shared future. History teaches us that our nations are stronger and our cause is more just when we appropriately recognize painful pasts and work to rebuild bridges of understanding toward a better tomorrow. The United States knows this lesson well from the dark chapters in our own history. I support the courageous steps taken by individuals in Armenia and Turkey to foster a dialogue that acknowledges their common history. As we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and pay tribute to the memories of those who perished, we also recommit ourselves to ensuring that devastating events like these are never repeated. This is a contemporary cause that thousands of Armenian-Americans have made their own.

The legacy of the Armenian people is one of resiliency, determination, and triumph over those who sought to destroy them. The United States has deeply benefited from the significant contributions to our nation by Armenian Americans, many of whom are descended from the survivors of the Meds Yeghern. Americans of Armenian descent have strengthened our society and our communities with their rich culture and traditions. The spirit of the Armenian people in the face of this tragic history serves as an inspiration for all those who seek a more peaceful and just world.

Our hearts and prayers are with Armenians everywhere as we recall the horrors of the Meds Yeghern, honor the memories of those who suffered, and pledge our friendship and deep respect for the people of Armenia.

**Malaria Treatment Expands Worldwide, Deaths Decline**

By Charlene Porter  
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. officials working to reduce the scourge of malaria celebrated successes, reaffirmed commitment and stared down the road ahead on World Malaria Day April 25.

"We have a lot to celebrate; the trends are all going in the right direction," said Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer, the coordinator for the President's Malaria Initiative. "However, we need to be sobered by the job ahead of us."

In a press briefing at the New York Foreign Press Center April 25, Ziemer quoted international health research finding that a child dies of malaria every 45 seconds in Africa alone, where the disease causes 20 percent of all childhood deaths. Ziemer said the global death toll from the mosquito-borne, parasitic disease has decreased from the highs of recent years, but it will still kill 780,000 people this year, even though it is both preventable and treatable. In addition to its impact in Africa, malaria affects millions of people in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and parts of the Middle East and Western Hemisphere.

The President's Malaria Initiative began in 2006 to devote new resources to effective, proven solutions. It increased distribution of malaria-treated bed nets and in-home insecticide treatment to step up prevention. On the treatment side, the initiative poured billions more dollars into improved diagnostic tools, better health care worker training and wider distribution of effective medications. Ziemer said the measures have touched 100 million lives.

In a statement issued by the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah said this escalated effort on malaria saves 150,000 lives every year. "Not only are we preventing children from dying from malaria," Shah said, "those efforts are freeing up hospital beds and scarce medical resources that can be used to prevent children from dying from other causes."

Losing lives and days to severe illness is only the most obvious consequence of malaria. Economists have documented that the time, work, productivity and prosperity lost when people are ill from malaria is a serious obstacle to economic development, especially in Africa. Retired Houston Rockets basketball star Dikembe Mutombo, who supports anti-malaria efforts in his home of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, emphasized the point.

"If these people are dying ... there's no way we can see the continent continue to develop," said Mutombo,

another participant in the briefing. "We are losing engineers, doctors, nurses, great politicians, great leaders of our communities, even our young people today."

The basketball legend speaks from experience. He was exposed to malaria on a visit home to Africa and fell ill when he returned to the United States. He had the benefit of sophisticated medical treatment that is out of reach for many in his homeland.

Ziemer offered a real-world example of the link between malaria and economic development. He said a business in western Ghana invested \$1.5 million in malaria prevention programs in a community where many of its employees lived. Over two years, the company noted a 70 percent reduction in the occurrence of disease. The number of working hours lost to sickness declined by 95 percent.

"That's exactly why we need to get malaria eliminated in Africa," Ziemer said, "because it has a direct link to poverty elimination and business development."

While the treatment and cure of malaria is available and effective, a vaccine against the disease is still out of reach. The Plasmodium parasite that causes the disease takes four different forms, different enough that no one vaccine will be effective against all. Researchers face difficult choices about which version of the parasite to target in vaccine development, so Ziemer believes a vaccine might still be five, if not 10, years away.

### **Studies Say Cities Are Ill Prepared for Hazards of Climate Change**

By Jeff Baron  
Staff Writer

Washington — A U.S. researcher says cities worldwide are particularly vulnerable to damage from the effects of climate change — and doing little to prepare for them.

The cities also are failing to reduce the damage they are causing through carbon emissions, the researcher said.

The warnings come from sociologist Patricia Romero-Lankao of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, which is based in Boulder, Colorado, and supported by the government-backed National Science Foundation. Working with the U.N. Human Settlements Programme, she studied policies around the world and found that many urban areas, especially in developing countries, will suffer disproportionately as global temperatures rise.

The dangers vary from place to place: increased storm surges in coastal cities, wildfires during droughts in some places, increased suffering from heat waves and pollution in others.

"If a levee has been built to withstand a 100 years flood, and now it can be that we get three or four of those of even a larger intensity, then those infrastructures are not climate-proofed," Romero-Lankao said. Each city faces its own particular "bundle of climate stresses," she said.

Many cities have talked about facing the dangers of climate change, she said, but their actions "have not been so effective." Some cities have made changes to limit their carbon output — by requiring that new buildings be more energy-efficient, for example, or by expanding the use of public transit in place of cars — but they are doing less to adapt to predicted changes.

Part of the problem is "a mismatch of scales," Romero-Lankao said. "People care about short-term issues, very immediate issues, but climate issues require that you think in terms of short, medium and long temporal levels and scales." When the hazards from climate change are immediate, she said, it will be too late to make the necessary changes to protect people from them.

Fast-growing cities in the developing world have the opportunity — with help — to adapt to climate change as they grow, she said: They can build transit and sanitation systems that their people will need, they can incorporate green space into growth, and they can prevent construction in hazardous locations along waterfronts, among other things.

A crucial factor in how well cities will respond is how open and honest their governments are, and thus how difficult it is for developers or other interests to sway city policies for their short-term benefit.

More than half of the world's population lives in cities. Romero-Lankao said that by 2020, more than 500 cities will have at least 1 million residents.

David Morley, a research associate at the American Planning Association in Washington, agreed that "both rich cities and poor cities around the world are not doing enough, fast enough, to make a substantive difference yet."

"Most of the planning work so far has focused on mitigation, meaning: What can we do so that we're not putting as much CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere?" Morley said. "I think we're starting to see a growing awareness of the importance of climate change adaptation, which would be: What can we do to protect our critical infrastructure from the effects of climate change that may be inevitable at this point, and how can we ensure that we're keeping people in that critical infrastructure out of harm's way as much as possible?"

Some cities have adopted climate action plans or

incorporated that approach into their comprehensive plans and regulations. Morley's organization maintains a database of the plans on its website.

Romero-Lankao's findings appear in two journals: *European Planning Studies* and *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*.

### **Muslim-American Women Lead Community Projects for Earth Day**

By M. Scott Bortot  
Staff Writer

Washington — In schools, mosques and community groups around the United States, Muslim-American women are working with their neighbors to ensure that Earth Day's message of protecting the planet isn't heard only on one day, but year-round.

Dina Badawy, a behavior and social change consultant in Charlotte, North Carolina, said Earth Day, held annually April 22, is only a focal point for generating awareness.

"As a member of the Muslim religious community, whenever I conduct environmental justice outreach on Earth Day, it's not because I think that Earth Day is the only day you should practice conservation," Badawy said. "It's a launching pad for future events and projects throughout the year."

Badawy, who has worked in faith-based community outreach for the Earth Day Network, met with nearly two dozen neighbors to discuss how they can reduce harm to the environment.

"We thought it would be good to have a local garden-development workshop," Badawy said, because growing vegetables locally cuts down on fossil fuels used to transport produce. "From all different angles, gardening is a beautiful contribution to environmental justice."

Bhawana Kamil, head of the Muslim American Society chapter in San Francisco and founder of the group's Muslim Green Team, said members are encouraged to participate in community events to mark Earth Day.

Formed in 2007, the Muslim Green Team's goal is "to educate and equip the Muslim community to live greener lives" and to educate the wider community about Muslim environmental teachings, she said. The Muslim Green Team took advantage of the fact that Earth Day coincided with Friday and contacted mosques nationwide.

"What we are asking is that all the imams who give the sermons on Friday ... give a sermon about Islam and the environment," Kamil said. The Muslim Green Team created a list of speaking points, "and we have been

trying to distribute it widely across the country." They asked for feedback from mosques to determine its success.

Six months after Earth Day, the Muslim Green Team hosts the EcoFair, a community-wide event to encourage environmentally friendly practices.

"We include children's activities, demonstrations and free giveaways to ensure that everyone walks away with information and tools to live a greener life," Kamil said.

Muslim-American educators are involving their students in Earth Day activities. Ayesha Kazi, a teacher at Muslim Community Center Full-Time School in Morton Grove, Illinois, integrates the environment into the classroom.

To mark Earth Day, the school held its Zero Waste Day. Instead of using paper towels, students air-dried their hands and used both sides of paper in the classroom. To reduce waste at lunch, students brought food in reusable containers or, if they purchased a school lunch, used reusable plates and utensils from home.

"We always talk to our students about how to protect the environment, but we thought that this would really be a good hands-on activity for them," Kazi said. "Rather than talking about it, we wanted to do something. We wanted to give them a hands-on experience with living a green lifestyle."

Azra Kazmi, a teacher at the College Preparatory School of America in Lombard, Illinois, said the school's environment club took the initiative this year and marked Earth Day by volunteering for Clean-Up Day on April 23 as part of Lombard Pride Week.

Following Earth Day, Kazmi leads the school's Health and Awareness Week. During the week, high school students and younger students watch the environmental awareness film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the environment club grades student presentations on conservation, and students plant trees.

"The point of this is for the students to take ownership," Kazmi said. "Then we will have every class create a name for the tree and have a care plan for the tree and then work to maintain it."

Kazmi and Kazi say that educating children creates environmental consciousness that lasts a lifetime.

"If we plant these seeds at a young age and get them thinking about conservation and generally protecting the environment, then hopefully they can make these changes in their lifestyles," Kazi said. "It is just slow and steady, baby steps. They can implement these changes in their lives and I think that starting from a young age is key so

they can develop good habits.”

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)